

THIS OLD MAN THEMES TO DISCUSS

1. Laundry list of physical ailments – hard for a young person to imagine; we take it for granted, but how do people cope with having so many things wrong with them?; when nothing is wrong with our body, most of us never think about it, but in old age you think about your body constantly
2. And what about holes in your memory? Cognitive lapses, lost words? As future doctors, you rely on your minds to carry you through, but what is it like when the mind slips?
3. Invisibility of the elderly – respected, even loved, but not worth listening to anymore
4. Loss – “most people I know are dead”; yet this too is not as expected – the weight is not unbearable to his surprise; pain gives way to something “still gleaming”; the dead paradoxically sustain him, remind him of life
 - a. Loss of wife particularly hard – phase when he would experience her as actually still present
5. Impending decline and death – “Decline and disaster impend, but my thoughts don’t linger there”; later “...I don’t think about my approaching visitor, death” – seems he is no longer afraid because he is so much more familiar with death; in a way, has less to lose
6. How does Angell cope? Downward comparison, feeling lucky; focus on what works: “the pains and insults are bearable”; I’m not dead and I’m not yet mindless”; takes pleasure/pride in his long survival
7. What sustains him? a) work – meaning b) family and friends c) capacity to still feel happiness d) importance of deep attachments and intimate love – we are social creatures